

# MEPA/NEPA/HB495 CHECKLIST

## **PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION**

**1. Type of Proposed State Action:** Implement a 5-year Agricultural (hay) lease on the Beckman Wildlife Management Area.

**2. Agency Authority for the Proposed Action**

FWP has the authority under Section 87-1-210 MCA to protect, enhance, and regulate the use of Montana's fish and wildlife resources for public benefit now and in the future.

In addition, in accordance with the Montana Environmental Policy Act, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (MFWP) is required to assess the impacts that any proposal or project might have on the natural and human environments. Further, MFWP's land lease-out policy, as it pertains to the disposition of interest in Department lands (89-1-209) requires an Environmental Assessment (EA) to be written for all new agricultural leases, lease extensions or lease renewals.

**3. Name of Project**

Beckman WMA hay lease

**4. Name, Address and Phone Number of Project Sponsor (if other than the agency)**

Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks  
4600 Giant Springs Road  
Great Falls, MT 59405  
406-454-5840

**5. If Applicable:**

**Estimated Construction/Commencement Date**

30 April, 2011

**Estimated Completion Date**

September 15, 2015

**Current Status of Project Design (% complete)**

100% complete

**6. Location Affected by Proposed Action (county, range and township)**

Beckman Wildlife Management Area  
Fergus County, 18 North, 15 East, Section 1, 12  
Fergus County, 18 North, 16 East, Section 4, 6  
Fergus County, 19 North, 16 East, Section 31, 32, & 33

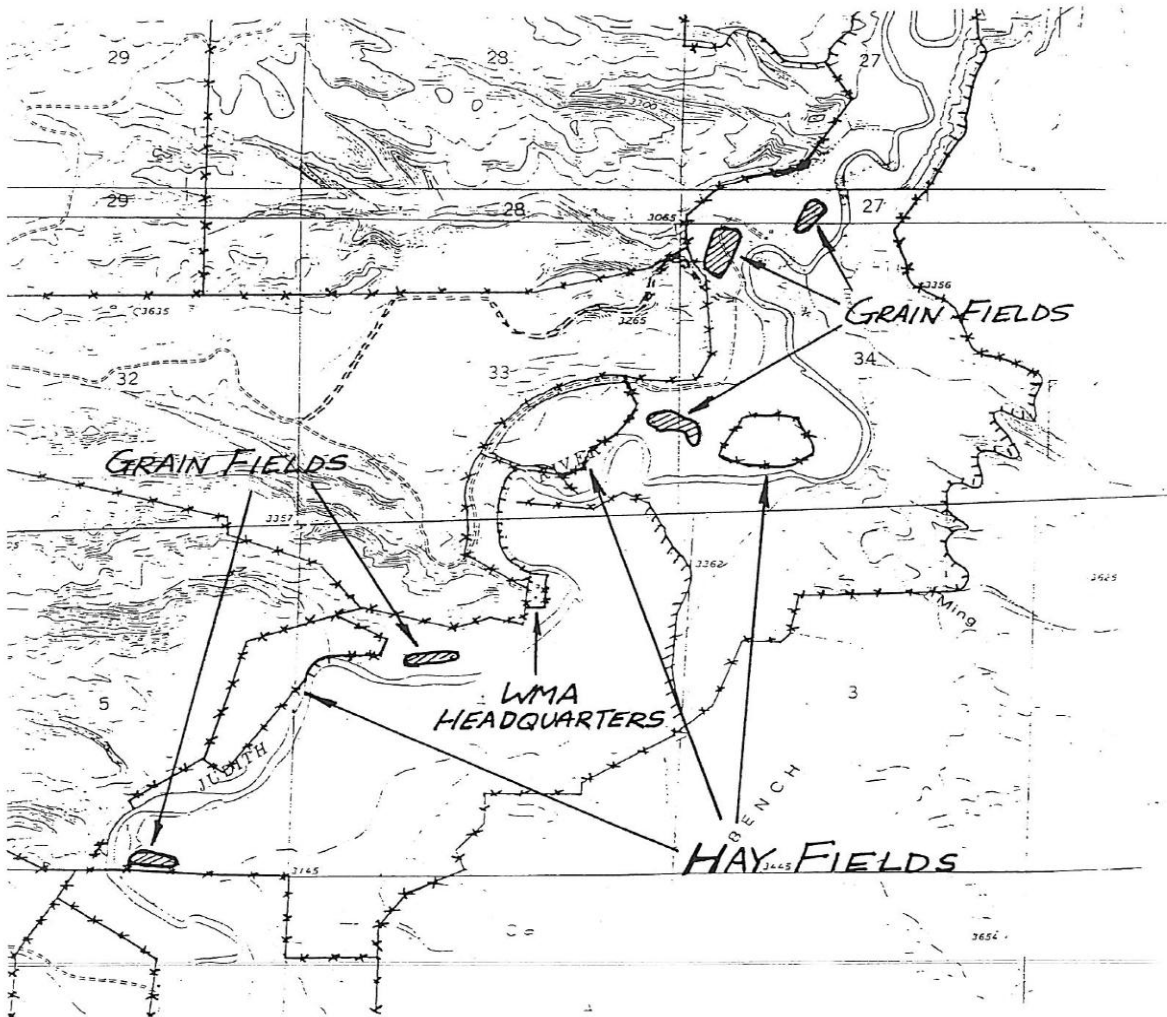
**7. Project Size: Estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:**

	<u>Acres</u>		<u>Acres</u>
(a) Developed:		(d) Floodplain	<u>0</u>
Residential	<u>0</u>		
Industrial	<u>0</u>	(e) Productive:	
		Irrigated cropland	<u>124</u>
(b) Open Space/Woodlands/Recreation	<u>0</u>	Dry cropland	<u>0</u>
		Forestry	<u>0</u>
(c) Wetlands/Riparian Areas	<u>0</u>	Rangeland	<u>0</u>
		Other	<u>0</u>

8. Map/site plan:

APPENDIX A:  
LOCATION AND LEGAL DESCRIPTION OF LEASED HAY FIELDS and  
SMALL GRAIN FOOD PLOTS  
on the  
BECKMAN WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

Three irrigated hay fields, totaling approximately 100 acres, are located on the Beckman Wildlife Management Area, 12 miles northeast of Denton, Montana, with the following legal description: Approximately 36 acres in W1/2 Sec.4 and the E1/2 Sec.5, T18N, R16E; and approximately 43 acres in SE1/4 Sec.33, T19N, R16E; and approximately 21 acres in the SW1/4 Sec.34, T19N, R16E. Five grain fields, totaling approximately 24 acres, have the following legal description: Approximately 4 acres in SW1/4 Sec.27, T19N, R16E; and approximately 8 acres in the NW1/4 Sec. 34, T19N, R16E; and approximately 4 acres in SE1/4 Sec.33 and SW1/4 Sec.34, T19N, R16E; and approximately 4 acres in NW1/4 Sec. 4, T18N, R16E; and approximately 4 acres in SE1/4 Sec.5, T18N, R16E.



**9. Narrative summary of the proposed action or project including the benefits and purpose of the proposed action:**

To produce and provide high quality forage for mule deer, white-tailed deer, Merriam's turkey, and ring-necked pheasants by enhancing the quantity and quality of alfalfa hay produced on 3 irrigated hay fields, and by producing winter wheat on 5 other fields (food plots) located along the Judith River on the Beckman Wildlife Management Area (shown on Appendix A).

To establish an efficient and cost effective agricultural program based on a 5-year Cooperative Management Agreement with a competent lessee.

In Central Montana deer utilization of actively growing (irrigated) alfalfa hay fields, particularly during dry seasonal periods, is very important to the health and survival of deer. Actively growing and matured grain crops are also important to deer, Merriam's turkey and ring-necked pheasants, particularly during winter. Producing grain crops and (irrigated) alfalfa hay for wildlife is a very laborious and expensive process. This lease allows a lessee to produce hay on the Beckman WMA in exchange for annually leaving the irrigated alfalfa hay fields in good productive condition. With green succulent vegetation at the end of the growing season, and for producing grain crops that are left standing each year for the wildlife consumption during the winter months.

**10. Listing of any other Local, State or Federal agency that has overlapping or additional jurisdiction.**

**(a) Permits:**

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Permit</u>	<u>Date Filed/#</u>
N/A		

**(b) Funding:**

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Funding Amount</u>
N/A	

**(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:**

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Type of Responsibility</u>
N/A	

**11. List of agencies consulted during preparation of the EA:**

None

## PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

### 1. Evaluation of the impacts of the Proposed Action including secondary and cumulative impacts on the Physical and Human Environment.

#### A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. <u>LAND RESOURCES</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. **Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?		x				
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil which would reduce productivity or fertility?		x				
c. **Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		x				
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?		x				
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		x				
f. Other:		x				

**Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):**

2. <u>AIR</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. **Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (also see 13 (c))		x				
b. Creation of objectionable odors?		x				
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		x				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		x				
e. ***For P-R/D-J projects, will the project result in any discharge, which will conflict with federal or state air quality regs? (Also see 2a)		x				
f. Other:		x				

**Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Air Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):**

<b>3. <u>WATER</u></b>  <b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>	<b>IMPACT *</b>				<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated*</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
	<b>Unknown *</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor *</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>		
a. *Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?		x				
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?		x				
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of floodwater or other flows?		x				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		x				
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?		x				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		x				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		x				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?		x				
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?						x
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		x				
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		x				
l. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c)		x				
m. ***For P-R/D-J, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a)		x				
n. Other:		x				

**Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Water Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):**

- i. Irrigation of hay fields will occur within prescribed limits and scope of existing water rights for the WMA; hay fields are currently in place and are managed as irrigated cropland.

<b>4. <u>VEGETATION</u></b>  <b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>	<b>IMPACT *</b>				<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated *</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
	<b>Unknown *</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor *</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>		
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?		x				
b. Alteration of a plant community?		x				
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		x				
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		x				
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?		x				

f. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?		x				
g. Other:		x				

**Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):**

- i. Irrigation of hay fields will occur within prescribed limits and scope of existing water rights for the WMA; hay fields are currently in place and are managed as irrigated cropland.

<b>** 5. FISH/WILDLIFE</b>  Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		x				
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?		x				
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?		x				
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		x				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		x				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		x				
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?		x				
h. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f)		x				
i. ***For P-R/D-J, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d)		x				
j. Other:		x				

**Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):**

Hay and grain fields are presently in place and have been cultivated under previous lease agreements. Current proposed lease is a continuation of these previous lease arrangements.

## B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

<b>6. NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS</b>  Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Increases in existing noise levels?		x				
b. Exposure of people to serve or nuisance noise levels?		x				
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		x				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and		x				

operation?						
e. Other:		x				

**Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):**

<b>7. <u>LAND USE</u></b>  <b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>	<b>IMPACT *</b>				<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated *</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
	<b>Unknown *</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor *</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>		
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?		x				
b. Conflicted with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		x				
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		x				
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		x				
e. Other:		x				

**Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):**

Hay and grain fields are presently in place and have been cultivated under previous lease agreements. Current proposed lease is a continuation of these previous lease arrangements.

<b>8. <u>RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS</u></b>  <b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>	<b>IMPACT *</b>				<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated *</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
	<b>Unknown *</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor *</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>		
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?		x				
b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan or create a need for a new plan?		x				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?		x				
d. ***For P-R/D-J, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a)		x				
e. Other:		x				

**Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):**

<b>9. <u>COMMUNITY IMPACT</u></b>  <b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>	<b>IMPACT *</b>				<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated *</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
	<b>Unknown *</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor *</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>		

a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?		x				
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		x				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		x				
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?		x				
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?		x				
f. Other:		x				

**Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):**

<b>10. <u>PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES</u></b>	<b>IMPACT *</b>				<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated *</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
	<b>Unknown *</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor *</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>		
<b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>						
a. Will the proposed action have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify:		x				
b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		x				
c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		x				
d. Will the proposed action result in increased use of any energy source?		x				
e. **Define projected revenue sources		x				
f. **Define projected maintenance costs.		x				
g. Other:		x				

**Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):**

<b>** 11. <u>AESTHETICS/RECREATION</u></b>	<b>IMPACT *</b>				<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated *</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
	<b>Unknown *</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor *</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>		
<b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>						
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?		x				
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		x				



c. **Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report)		x				
d. ***For P-R/D-J, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c)		x				
e. Other:		x				

**Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):**

12. <u>CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. **Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric historic, or paleontological importance?		x				
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?		x				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		x				
d. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect historic or cultural resources? Attach SHPO letter of clearance. (Also see 12.a)		x				
e. Other:		x				

**Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):**

## SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

13. <u>SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE</u> Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources that create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)		x				
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?		x				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?		x				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		x				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		x				

f. *** <u>For P-R/D-J</u> , is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e)		x				
g. *** <u>For P-R/D-J</u> , list any federal or state permits required.		x				

**Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Water Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):**

## **PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW, CONTINUED**

### **2. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider and a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented:**

No action alternative would allow existing agricultural fields and crops (alfalfa) to desiccate and die. Weeds will become established, necessitating additional control and management efforts. An existing, traditional agricultural use of these 124 acres will be discontinued, with attendant loss to the agricultural and wildlife productivity of the Area.

### **3. Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency:**

1. Provide equipment, labor, seed, fertilizer, herbicides/pesticides essential for renovating and reestablishing alfalfa fields and for producing, irrigating, and harvesting hay from the 3 irrigated hay fields in the Beckman WMA. (See schedule in attached Appendix C).
2. Provide equipment, labor, seed and herbicides/pesticides essential for producing small grain food plots, which will be left standing for wildlife, on 12 acres in 2 or 3 of the 5 fields, each year.
3. Farm the middle (48-acre wheel-line) hay field to produce and receive a crop of barley hay in the years 2011 and 2012 (as specified in APPENDIX C), to eliminate weeds and reestablish a vigorous stand of alfalfa after the barley hay harvest in 2012. Farm the south (40-acre hand-line) hay field to produce and receive a crop of barley hay in the years 2013 and 2014 (as specified in APPENDIX C), to eliminate weeds and reestablish a vigorous stand of alfalfa after the barley hay harvest in 2014.
4. Provide and apply 100 pounds per acre actual phosphorous fertilizer to the middle (48-acre wheel-line) hay field during the spring 2012 (as specified in APPENDIX C). Provide and apply 100 pounds per acre actual phosphorous fertilizer to the south (40-acre hand-line) hay field during the spring of 2014.
5. Provide and apply herbicides to control annual and perennial weeds in the middle (48-acre wheel-line) hay field during the 2 years barley is grown for hay. Weeds (predominantly annuals) will be sprayed during the summers of 2011 and 2012 with a non-residual herbicide (as specified in APPENDIX C). Perennial weeds will be sprayed during September 2011, following the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> frost, with non-residual herbicides Landmaster BW and Roundup at rates of 54 oz./ac and 16 oz./ac. respectively (as specified in APPENDIX C). Provide and apply herbicides to control annual and perennial weeds in the south (40-acre hand-line) hay field during the 2 years of barley is grown for hay. Weeds (predominantly annuals) will be sprayed during the summers of 2013 and 2014 with a non-residual herbicide (as specified in APPENDIX C). Perennial weeds will be sprayed during September 2013, following the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> frost, with non-residual herbicides Landmaster BW and Roundup at rates of 54 oz./ac and 16 oz./ac. respectively (as specified in APPENDIX C).

6. Provide and seed the middle (48-acre wheel-line) hay field with 1.5 lb./ac. orchardgrass and 5.0 lb./ac. alfalfa (varieties specified in APPENDIX C) immediately after the second-year's crop of barley has is harvested in early August 2012. Commence irrigating the seeded alfalfa in the middle field, with a complete coverage of at least 3 inches of water (as specified in APPENDIX C). Provide and seed the south (40-acre hand-line) hay field with 1.5 lb./ac. orchardgrass and 5.0 lb./ac. alfalfa (varieties specified in APPENDIX C) immediately after the second-year's crop of barley has is harvested in early August 2014. Commence irrigating the seeded alfalfa in the middle field, with a complete coverage of at least 3 inches of water (as specified in APPENDIX C).
  7. Proceed with haying harvest no earlier than July 15 annually, to provide upland bird nesting allowances, remove bales from hay fields and commence irrigating 2<sup>nd</sup> crop and complete harvest of 2<sup>nd</sup> crops no later than August 30. Remove all bales from the fields and complete fall irrigation coverage of at least 3 inches of water to provide for green up.
  8. All harvested hay must be removed from the Beckman WMA by September 15 each year.
  9. Use the water and existing sprinkler systems, owned and controlled by MFWP, on the 3 above described hay fields for producing barley hay, first and second cuttings of alfalfa hay and a third crop of alfalfa hay produced and left standing for wildlife.
  10. Pay all the costs associated with irrigation, including all normal operational wear and tear and maintenance requirements to irrigation equipment, and all charges from Fergus Electric Cooperative, Inc. for operating the 3 electrical pumps—on an 'as due' basis. Any associated delinquent bills will result in the lessee's forfeiture of this lease.
  11. No application of herbicides/pesticides from an aircraft.
  12. Maintain the existing fences around the hay fields to prevent cattle depredations to crops and crop yields on the Beckman WMA. Absorb any negative impacts/costs of livestock depredations annually accrued to crops and crop yields.
  13. Absorb any negative impacts/costs of wildlife depredations annually accrued to crops and crop yields on the Beckman WMA.
  14. Not use existing buildings or facilities, or to establish temporary or permanent buildings or facilities on the Beckman WMA without written permission from MFWP.
  15. Provide MFWP with a written report on or before December 31<sup>st</sup> of each calendar year that accounts for the agricultural practices (i.e. fertilizer, herbicides/pesticides, seed) used during the year, the amount of hay produced per cutting per field, and the dates that each field and crop of alfalfa was irrigated and harvested, and all of the costs of irrigation (electrical, irrigation parts, and repair, etc.).
4. **Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required (YES/NO)? If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action.**

Based on the environmental impact of this project, an EIS is not required. The area of land being cultivated equals 124 acres and the project will not have any significant negative effects on the land. The EA is the appropriate level of review for a project of this nature.

- 5. Describe the level of public involvement for this project if any and, given the complexity and the seriousness of the environmental issues associated with the proposed action, is the level of public involvement appropriate under the circumstances?**

A legal notice will be placed in the Lewistown newspaper considering the project will be in Fergus County. The legal notice will contain a project description, timeframe and pertinent contact/comment information for obtaining a copy of the Environmental Assessment form.

- 6. Duration of comment period, if any.**

A 21 day comment period will be sufficient for this project considering its minimal expected impact and consequence. Posting will occur March 10 and a public comment period terminate April 8, 2011. Public comment will be received at the mailing address listed below or by email to [fwprg42@mt.gov](mailto:fwprg42@mt.gov)

- 7. Name, title, address and phone number of the person(s) responsible for preparing the EA:**

Graham Taylor and Mark Schlepp  
Regional Wildlife Manager  
4600 Giant Springs Road  
Great Falls, MT 595405  
(406) 454-5840

### **PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT**